



# How to Do Business with Columbia County

Columbia County

May 29, 2007

Volume 1, Issue 1

## PROCUREMENT DEPARTMENT

*To provide operating departments with goods and services on a timely and efficient basis, at the right quantity, quality, and lowest overall cost. We maintain the public's trust by reducing the County's exposure to criticism and lawsuits. Procurement is charged with operating a warehouse facility, disposing of surplus property in a cost effective manner, and overseeing a county-wide contract management strategy that efficiently monitors and coordinates all service agreements.*

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# **Introduction**

The Procurement Office should be your first point of contact with the County. Our role is to bring together users and suppliers to ensure that the County receives the best value for the services, materials, supplies and equipment needed to effectively and efficiently operate the County. We are here to help you understand how best to do business with Columbia County. As can be expected, there are rules to follow and we will do our best to inform you of these rules, or as we call them, the County's Procurement Policy. Should you ever have a question or concern we encourage you to contact the Procurement Manager directly at (706) 868-3305. We hope you will find this information helpful.

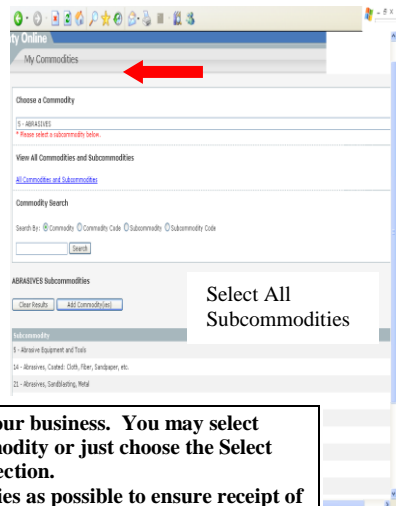
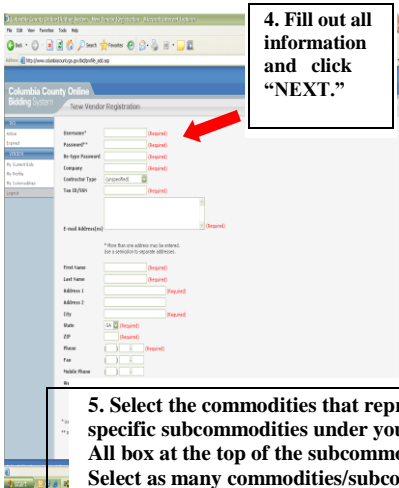
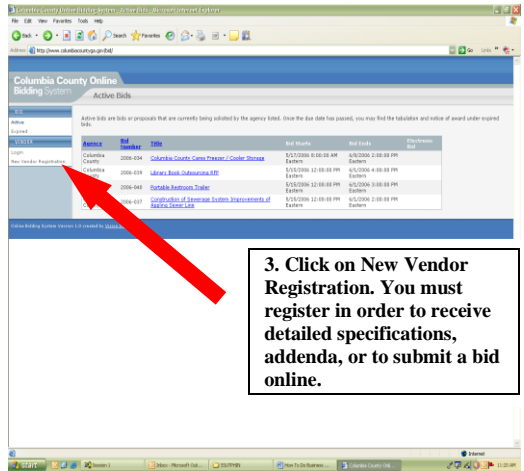
One of the unique things about working with the County is that we are a local government; therefore, we are accountable to various elected officials, auditors and most importantly, taxpayers. Consequently, everything we do is considered "public information" and may be subject to public inspection. As a result, we believe the best way to protect the interest of the citizens we serve is to deal ethically, fairly and objectively with all vendors, contractors and suppliers.

## **Vendor List and Internet-Based Bidding System**

The Columbia County Board of Commissioners has an online system to maintain our vendor database and issue most requests for Bid's and Request For Proposals (RFP's). Vendors wishing to be placed on Columbia County's vendor list and receive automatic notification of Bids and RFP's via email are encouraged to register on the County's site.

The following steps explain the registration process:

1. Go to the County's site at [www.columbiacountyga.gov](http://www.columbiacountyga.gov)



You are now finished with the registration process. If you ever need to make any changes to your profile you can go to the "My Profile" tab located on the left side of the screen.

# Purchasing Thresholds

The Procurement Office has the responsibility of conducting County business in a professional manner. Each department has funds allocated to it; however, from a purchasing perspective, there is only one kind of money, the public's money.

The County's operating funds come from local taxpayers, State and Federal governments, various fees, grants, special activities, etc. Therefore, all purchases no matter how large or small must be made in accordance with the County's Procurement Policy. The County's Procurement Policy dictates the method of procurement that must be used for each type of purchase:

- \$1.00 - \$1,999.00 – Straight purchase, no quotes required.
- Purchases from \$2,000.00 - <\$20,000 - require 3-5 **written** quotes, unless it is sole source, contract or references a particular Bid #
- Purchases over \$20,000 - require Formal Bid or Request for Proposal.

It is against the County's Procurement Policy to split a purchase into two or more orders to avoid the \$20,000 limit and related requirement for the Bid or RFP process.

# Competitive Solutions

In general, price competition is the best way to make money go further. The process we go through also designates who the chosen vendor should be in a fair and equitable manner. That is why we advocate competition "wherever practicable" in an effort to promote fairness and better pricing.

## Formal Solicitation

Formal Solicitation is required when the purchase is anticipated to exceed \$20,000. There are two basic types of formal solicitations:

1. Bid
2. Request for Proposal (RFP)



Both the Bid and RFP require advertisement in the local newspaper and may also be advertised in other area newspapers and professional trade journals. The intent with these solicitations is to generate as much involvement as possible with qualified suppliers. There are some significant differences between the Bid and RFP. The primary difference is award criteria. Generally, the Bid is awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. In other words, the bidder who submits a bid that meets all of the requirements and specifications of the Bid at the lowest overall cost. On the other hand, the RFP is typically awarded to the responsive and responsible respondent receiving the highest overall ranking, as decided by an Evaluation Panel. During the RFP evaluation process, the top ranked respondents may be asked to give a formal presentation to the panel. Additionally, the price and other terms of agreement may be negotiated with the firm receiving the highest overall ranking by the panel.

## Brand Name and Substitute Items

The County is always seeking the best value for the money. Occasionally, a brand name is used in specifications to establish a standard grade or quality and will generally be followed by the words "or equal". The County will consider any substitute item(s) that meet or

exceed all the requirements of the specifications. It is the supplier's responsibility to provide all the information on any substitute item(s) they use in their bid. The County reserves the right to review and either accept or reject any substitute item(s).

## Questions on Specifications

Questions pertaining to a Bid or RFP should be directed to the Procurement Manager at (706) 868-3305. The County will frequently hold a public "pre-bid" or "pre-proposal" meeting to review the specifications and answer any questions prior to the Bid or RFP opening date. When appropriate, a site visit may be conducted following the "pre-bid" or "pre-proposal" meeting. We strongly encourage all prospective bidders or respondents to attend these meetings. Occasionally, a pre-meeting will be "MANDATORY" and will require any prospective vendor to attend. The meetings are usually deemed mandatory if Columbia County wants the vendors to actually SEE something.

When revisions or clarifications to the Bid or RFP are necessary, the County will issue an addendum. An addendum is a written document that modifies the Bid or RFP and becomes part of the Bid or RFP documents. Sometimes it is necessary to issue more than one addendum. Each bidder on the list of bidders (or plan holders list) will receive a copy of each addendum; however, ultimately it is the vendor's responsibility to ensure they have received any addenda.

## Insurance Requirements

The Columbia County Board of Commissioners generally requires anyone who is performing any work on County owned property to provide the following forms of insurance:

- General Liability
- Automobile Liability
- Workers Compensation

The amount of the coverage for each of these forms of insurance depends on the total dollar value of the contract. Please read the Bid or RFP specifications and check with your insurance agent to make sure that you comply with all of the County's insurance requirements before submitting your quote, bid or proposal

## Submitting Your Bid or RFP

Be sure to read the entire Bid / RFP package and complete all the required documents. Check the figures to make sure that the unit prices and the extended amounts agree. In the event there is a discrepancy between the unit price and the extended amount, the unit price will prevail. Likewise, if there is a discrepancy between the amount shown in numbers and the amount shown in written words, the written words will prevail. Be sure to SIGN YOUR BID OR PROPOSAL BEFORE YOU SUBMIT IT. Bid and RFP opening times are strictly adhered to. Any bids or proposals submitted after the time specified in the Bid or RFP, or in an addendum, will not be accepted and will remain unopened. Faxed or other electronically submitted bids or proposals are NOT ACCEPTABLE. All bids or proposals need to be delivered to the County as specified in the bid or proposal specifications.

## Writing A Winning Proposal

- ✓ **First**, you must make a decision to do everything in your power to win the proposed job. This means you must follow the rules. Submitting proposals on government contracts is far different than on commercial contracts. It begins with your will and ability to do business the government's way, not your way. Keep in mind that every agency has a unique set of guidelines for you to use. You **MUST** follow the prescribed format if you want to be considered.
- ✓ **Second**, you must provide specific answers, not vague generalities. Most government Requests For Proposals (RFP's) do not define how a task is to be accomplished. They leave that definition up to you, the proposer. If you want to win, your proposal must first clearly identify the agency goals and then show in detail how you will accomplish those goals. Vague generalities, "blowing smoke," and other end-runs around the problem will not receive consideration. You must be specific.
- ✓ **Third**, if you would like to provide an alternative, make sure you first address the problem from the requested point of view. Remember, you are dealing with a bureaucracy, and chances are the government wants the task accomplished its way. However, Columbia County cherishes innovative solutions and will not reject alternatives out-of-hand.

- ✓ **Fourth**, no experience means no contract, so if you need to hire a “technical advisor” (preferably one who has worked for or with the agency), do it!! Recent hands-on experience in solving similar problems is even better. Don’t just dump reports, manuals, or other material from a prior job into your RFP; make sure anything you include is appropriate and up-to-date.
- ✓ **Fifth**, price your services accurately, and prove your figures. Don’t “lowball” your proposal. You could get the contract and fail, and that could cost you both your business and reputation. If you have pricing problems, call your contact and ask how to proceed. Don’t be vague and unspecific on pricing in the hopes you can negotiate higher fees at a later date. No matter what you’ve heard, it doesn’t work that way.
- ✓ **Sixth**, be ready to negotiate. You may receive a letter or phone call saying that you are one of the finalists, and asking for “best & final” offers. Be prepared to make a deal or lose the contract to someone who will. If you did not present your lowest and best costs in the proposal, now is the time.
- ✓ **Finally**, follow through if you lose. Consider not winning your first proposal as a major learning experience. Butting heads with bureaucracy is a painful learning procedure, but doing it will assure a higher consideration the next time an opportunity presents itself. Don’t forget to call your contact and ask where your proposal went wrong, and if the rules permit, ask to see a copy of the winning proposal.

Source: Scripps Howard News Service

## Mistakes

If you realize that you have made a mistake in your bid or proposal prior to the opening date and time, you may take your package back and correct it and resubmit it before the opening date and time, or you may submit a sealed statement clarifying the error before the opening date and time. Last minute cost modifications written on the outside of an envelope are not valid.

Bids and proposals **CAN NOT** be corrected or withdrawn after the bid opening date and time.

## **What is “Piggybacking?”**

In short, "piggybacking" refers to using competitive Bid's / RFP's obtained by other governmental entities or requested earlier by Columbia County. The County may utilize a competitive Bid / RFP solicited by any other municipal, county, state, federal governmental agency, any combination of such agencies or any other competitive Bid / RFP deemed to be in the best interest of the County. By piggybacking other Bid's / RFP's the County can avoid the time consuming process of soliciting bids for the same commodity or service. Generally, we piggyback Bid's / RFP's that are less than one year "old" and where the pricing is still being honored by the vendor.

We also purchase directly off the State Term contract, which, as the name implies, are bids solicited and awarded by the State of Georgia. The State of Georgia offers State negotiated agreements, which permits, but does not obligate, us to purchase supplies and services without soliciting bids or quotes. Please advise us of any Term contracts or agreement you have been awarded by the State of Georgia, or of contracts that have been awarded to you by other governmental entities.

## **Award**

Once quotes, bids, or proposals are received, the Procurement Office and the department requesting the purchase will be involved in evaluating the results. For purchases valued \$20,000 and up, the Division Director and the Oversight Committee can make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners who, in turn, will vote on the award at a scheduled County Commission Meeting.

Once an award is made, a purchase order or a written contract is prepared with all the supporting documentation (i.e. insurance certificates, payment and performance bonds) attached. The appropriate parties then sign the purchase order or written contract document, and the order is placed.

## **Payment**

Payments are made from approved invoices. To avoid delays, submit a complete invoice that includes: the purchase order number, if applicable, a description of the item(s) or service, who received the item(s) or service, and the quantity, unit price, delivery charges and

total price, along with any discount terms that may apply. The County will make payments in accordance with the County Financial Policy. The County usually makes payments within 30-45 days after receipt of an approved invoice.

### **Submit Invoices To:**

Columbia County Board of Commissioners  
Finance Department, Accounts Payable  
P.O. Box 498  
Evans, GA 30809



# Most Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: How can I view Columbia County's Bids On-Line?**

**A:** Columbia County has available on our website a tool that administrates all Bids and RFPs with free access at [www.columbiacountyga.gov/bid/](http://www.columbiacountyga.gov/bid/) .

**Q: How can I be added to your vendor list?**

**A:** Please visit our website at [www.columbiacountyga.gov/bid/](http://www.columbiacountyga.gov/bid/) and register under New Vendor Registration.

**Q: How do I know when a bid has been advertised?**

**A:** You can look in the Columbia County News Times or click on the "["BID/RFP/RFQ Opportunities"](#)" link on our website at [www.columbiacountyga.gov](http://www.columbiacountyga.gov) located under the government tab in the Procurement section.

**Q: Where can I direct questions about a BID or RFP that is posted on the website?**

**A:** By contacting the Procurement department at (706)-868-3305, or by email at [ProcureHelp@columbiacountyga.gov](mailto:ProcureHelp@columbiacountyga.gov) , or email the Buyer whose email address is listed on the cover page of the Bid or Proposal or fax to (706) 868-3306

**Q: Where can I obtain Specifications/Requirements for a BID/RFP?**

**A:** You may do any of the following: **1)** Visit our website at [www.columbiacountyga.gov](http://www.columbiacountyga.gov) and click on the "["BID/RFP/RFQ Opportunities"](#)" link **2)** Call the Procurement Department at (706) 868-3305 **3)** Email a request to [ProcureHelp@columbiacountyga.gov](mailto:ProcureHelp@columbiacountyga.gov) .

**Q: Where will proposals be received?**

**A:** At the Columbia County Board of Commissioners Procurement Department at 500 Faircloth Dr., Bldg E, Evans, GA 30809.

**Q: What if I have objections about a bid?**

**A:** The Board reserves the right to reject any or all proposals. Any objections to the specifications/requirements as set forth should be filed in writing prior to the proposal deadline. Please contact the Procurement Department with your concerns at (706) 868-3305.

**Q: How can I obtain the results of a bid?**

**A:** You can call the Procurement Department at (706) 868-3305, or look under the document section of the appropriate BID/RFP/RFQ on our website for the evaluation.

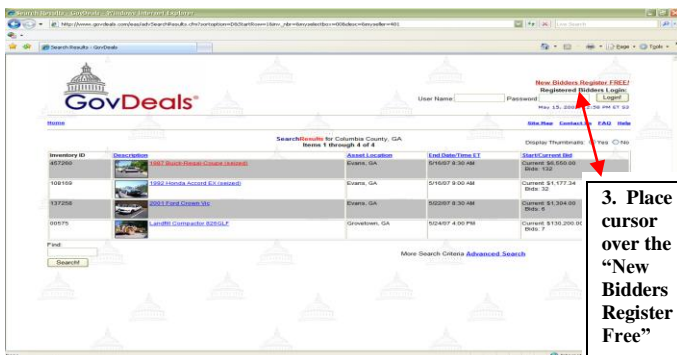
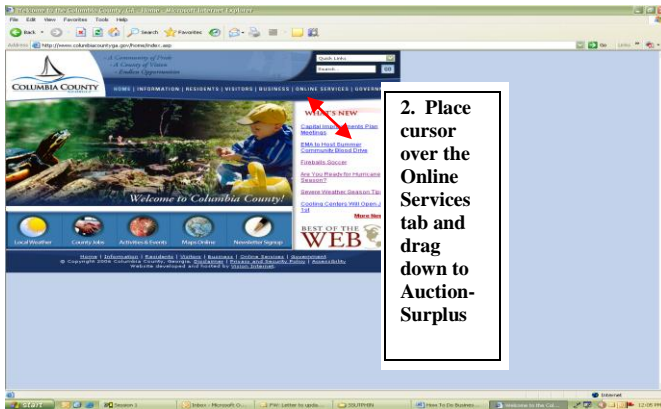
**Q: What is the difference between a BID and an RFP?**

**A:** A **Bid** typically refers to product(s) and is based on a defined set of specifications where the lowest price is the deciding factor. (Ex. Vehicle purchase)

An **RFP** (Request For Proposal) generally refers to services, and is not based on a defined set of specifications. Vendors are requested to submit a proposal that best meets a general set of objectives. The vendor with the best value in regard to price and services is awarded the contract. (Ex. Janitorial Services)

## Columbia County's Auction - Surplus

Go to the County's site at [www.columbiacountyga.gov](http://www.columbiacountyga.gov)



## **Registration with Georgia Secretary of State.**

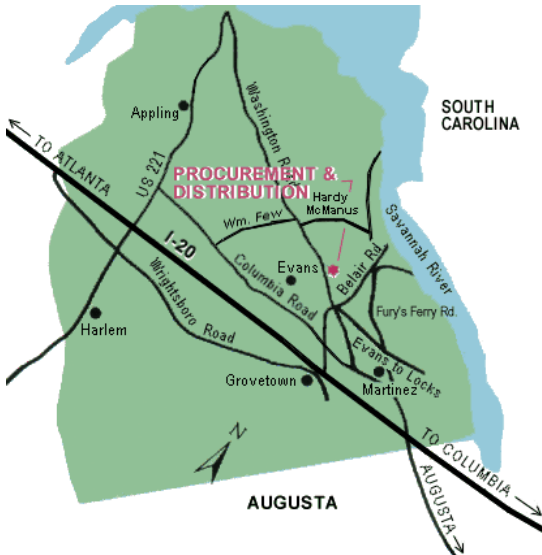
Columbia County requires all companies that are awarded a contract for services be registered with the Georgia Secretary of State. Registration instructions for corporations, partnerships, and limited liability companies can be obtained at the state's website <http://www.sos.ga.gov/corporations/> Additionally, frequently asked questions are listed at this link <http://sos.georgia.gov/corporations/faq.htm>

Sometimes, corporations incorporated in another state, a “foreign” corporation under Georgia law, should review the provisions of O.C.G.A 14-2-1501 (profit) or O.C.G.A 14-3-1501 (non-profit). These laws provide that a “foreign corporation may not transact business in this state until it obtains a certificate of authority from the Secretary of State.

<http://www.contractors-license.org/ga/Georgia.html>

## Directions

500 Faircloth Drive  
Building E  
Evans, Georgia 30809  
Phone: 706-868-3305  
Fax: 706-868-3306



### From the East

Follow I-20 west bound to Exit 194. Take Belair Road north to Washington Road. Take a left on Washington Road to Ronald Reagan Drive (US Post Office on corner). Turn right on Ronald Reagan Drive, and the Columbia County Government Center will be on the left. The office is located in Building E directly behind the Health Department.

### From the West

Follow I-20 east bound to Exit 194. Take Belair Road north to Washington Road. Take a left on Washington Road to Ronald Reagan Drive (US Post Office on corner). Turn right on Ronald Reagan Drive, and the Columbia County Government Center will be on the left. The office is located in Building E directly behind the Health Department.

### From the South

Follow I-520 north to west bound I-20. Follow I-20 west to Exit 194. Take Belair Road north to Washington Road. Take a left on Washington Road to Ronald Reagan Drive (US Post Office on corner). Turn right on Ronald Reagan Drive, and the Columbia County Government Center will be on the left. The office is located in Building E directly behind the Health Department.